

# SHOULD THE U.S. GOVERNMENT BE ALLOWED TO SEIZE PRIVATE PROPERTY?

**THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA FOR HOMEWORK, IN-CLASS TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.**

## INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the [Thinkalong module](#). Students can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

### **EMINENT DOMAIN CASE: HOW CAN YOU TAKE MY HOUSE?**

PBS | May 6th, 2013 | Video

3:39 minutes

A video from Constitution USA about how someone's property was seized through eminent domain and how he responded.

- Review of eminent domain featuring Peter Sagal, focusing specifically on the constitutionality of eminent domain.
- Sagal speaks with a man whose childhood home was seized and demolished through eminent domain.
- New London defended taking the land by citing the Constitution, specifically the Bill of Rights, as justification for exerting eminent domain.
- Part of the 5<sup>th</sup> amendment includes a provision that says "nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation" – even though this was originally included to protect property owners, but is now most frequently used by the government to seize privately owned lands as long as they pay property owners for it and it is needed for public use.
- In many cases, the "public" part was not so evident – building casinos, pools, etc. The New London case went to the Supreme Court where the justices voted against the property owners.

### **HARTFORD LOSES EMINENT DOMAIN FIGHT, ORDERED TO PAY NEARLY \$3 MILLION MORE**

WNPR | December 5th, 2016 | Radio

2:05 minutes

Radio story detailing the city of Hartford's struggles with eminent domain, specifically in building the new Dunkin Donuts Park by using eminent domain.

- Hartford city officials used eminent domain to seize land that was privately owned in order to increase funding for its baseball stadium project. The city paid out \$1.98 million to the owner but a court judge ruled that that amount was not enough.
- Judge ruled that Hartford owes an additional \$3 million for the land because the city's appraisal failed to announce the construction of the ball park as the reason for its use of eminent domain.
- The ballpark dramatically raised the value of the property so the original price that was paid to land owner was deemed insufficient.

## LANDOWNERS LIKELY TO BRING MORE LAWSUITS AS TRUMP MOVES ON BORDER WALL

NPR | February 23rd, 2017 | Radio

5:31 minutes

A radio story on the people who live along the U.S. – Mexico border and how they have responded to President Trump’s call to build a wall on or near their land.

- The Secure Fence Act of 2006, signed under President George W. Bush, created a partial border between the United States and Mexico, and subsequently raised several lawsuits from landowners near the Rio Grande river. President Trump’s proposed border wall may bring more lawsuits of a similar nature.
- Angry landowners have called the wall a government land grab, and have taken their cases to a U.S District Judge.
- Landowners have vied for different placement of the fence or gateway entrances to their land from the opposite side of the fence. Sometimes tracing a family’s tree to determine who has rights to the property can slow the process.
- Most cases are resolved, often in the government’s favor, through settlement payments to landowners. The median payout is approximately \$12,600. Many who have settled have yet to receive payment from the government, sometimes even years after a settlement is reached.

### KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your classroom and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Eminent Domain
- Fifth Amendment
- Seize
- Settlement

### CONTEMPLATE

Students will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help students answer these five questions about each piece of media.

### DEBATE

Students will engage their peers in an evidence-based debate using the media they just analyzed. Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form an evidence-based response to the debate question.

In addition to rich in-class discussions, teachers can also connect with other classrooms through the Thinkalong website. [Sign up here](#) to be connected.

*Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help students to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.*

# LET'S INVESTIGATE

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Use this worksheet to help you investigate the media sources in the Thinkalong module.

**SUMMARIZE THE TOPIC**

**KEY VOCABULARY**

## MEDIA RESOURCE 1

TITLE

DATE PUBLISHED

**MAIN IDEAS**



## MEDIA RESOURCE 2

TITLE

DATE PUBLISHED

MAIN IDEAS

## MEDIA RESOURCE 3

TITLE

DATE PUBLISHED

MAIN IDEAS

# CONTEMPLATE YOUR SOURCES

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

After watching the media in the module, answer the questions below.

1. AUTHORSHIP: Who created this message?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

2. FORMAT: What creative techniques are being used to grab my attention?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

3. AUDIENCE: How might different people understand this message differently than me?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

4. CONTENT: What values and points of view are represented? What's left out of this message?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

5. PURPOSE: Why is this message being sent?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3



# CREATE YOUR ARGUMENT

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Create strong arguments for both sides from the resources in the Thinkalong module.



DEBATE QUESTION	
PRO ARGUMENT	CON ARGUMENT
REASONING	REASONING
EVIDENCE	EVIDENCE